

*Unleashing the Transformative Potential of the 2030 Agenda
through Participatory Approaches:
Empowering the most vulnerable, transforming policies and institutions*

1. The International Movement ATD Fourth World has been engaged for over 60 years with families living in extreme poverty in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and North America. It works in partnership with people living in extreme poverty by empowering them to improve their own lives and those of their families and communities. Today, ATD Fourth World runs grassroots projects in 34 countries, all designed and planned together with people living in persistent poverty, always centered around the imperative of leaving no one behind.

2. Drawing on the knowledge and experience accumulated, ATD Fourth World – with general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1991 – carries out advocacy work at national, regional, and global levels, where it seeks to establish a dialogue with government authorities in order to ensure that the conditions are created for the most vulnerable to participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies that affect them directly. In view of HLPF 2019 and its theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality,” ATD Fourth World would like to highlight the following ideas during the meeting with Ambassador King:

Participation is central to Leave No One Behind and Reach the Furthest Behind First

3. The International Movement ATD Fourth World welcomes the text of the Political Declaration that will be adopted at the SDG Summit in September 2019 and appreciates in particular how the commitment of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first are central to the text and included as the first item in the call to action. To make words become reality, it is equally crucial to spell out the means needed to effectively and truly leave no one behind and include the most vulnerable in policy making and project implementation.

“We would like others to stop making decisions for us, to stop thinking for us, and to stop doing things for us, but to do these things with us.”

Angélique Jeanne, member of ATD Fourth World in Normandy, France, at the 15th European Fourth World People’s University in the European Parliament on 6 February 2019.

4. When people living in poverty can participate meaningfully in research and programming, the knowledge created contributes towards more comprehensive and effective policy design at national and international levels and ultimately towards the eradication of ‘poverty in all its forms.’ Only in this way can governments ensure the best possible use of available resources.

Several conditions must be met to ensure a fair and non-exploitative process that can foster the empowerment of people living in extreme poverty and enable them to speak for themselves and participate in decision-making processes that directly affect them. These conditions include:

- ✓ A common will to create equal partnership: commitment from institutions and policymakers to change is critical to the success of participation.
- ✓ Ensuring an environment that is safe and secure at all levels (mental, physical, emotional and psychological) and that fosters trust.
- ✓ Taking sufficient time for preparation so that people participating in the process thoroughly understand each step of the consultation.
- ✓ Ensuring the language used is understandable by all (e.g: taking the time to explain expert jargon or acronyms).
- ✓ Guaranteeing confidentiality when needed.

Participation helps to transform people, knowledge, policies and institutions

5. To achieve real and lasting change, the capacity of all stakeholders must be strengthened and institutions must adapt at the same time. This includes promoting local ownership of projects in vulnerable communities, making institutions more effective, responsive, and inclusive in their decision-making processes, and implementing innovative systems that are open and transparent.

6. This requires that staff and personnel be trained in participatory practices and human rights-based approaches, and that all stakeholders be present at the table.

Transforming schools: In Tanzania, ATD Fourth World conducted a participatory project from 2015 to 2017 entitled *Promoting inclusive access to primary school education taking into account the views of people living in poverty*. It involved teachers, school administrators, students, and parents from 14 schools within and outside Dar-es-Salaam. The recommendations drawn from the research have generated change:

- ✓ Involving parents in the children's education has improved their performance.
- ✓ Providing school meals has enabled students to study more effectively.
- ✓ Opening an adult literacy class has addressed the wishes of the parents and supported their access to education.

Transforming knowledge and the understanding of poverty: In Bolivia, Bangladesh, Tanzania, France, Great-Britain and the United States, ATD Fourth World in partnership with Oxford University led an international participatory research entitled the *Hidden Dimensions of poverty* based on the Merging Knowledge approach, where people with direct experience of poverty, academics, and practitioners worked together as equals to meet the challenge raised by the 2030 Agenda: to define all forms of poverty (SDG 1).

The innovative results of this research – revealing the core experience of poverty as a process of disempowerment – are available online at: <https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/international-advocacy/dimensions-of-poverty/>

Making the United Nations System more people-centered, participative and inclusive

7. Taking advantage of the United Nations Development System and High Level Political Forum reform process, key changes can be implemented for the voices and experience of the most marginalized segments of society to be taken into account in global policy making and development:

- ✓ **Mainstreaming consultation and participatory research based on the direct and meaningful participation of vulnerable communities** at all levels, in the global programming and monitoring related to the implementation of the SDGs, including in the work of UN agencies such as UNDP and UNICEF. This requires proper training of staff and their sensitization to the positive effect of this process.
- ✓ Reinforcing community-based accountability and **strengthen review mechanisms for Member States as they implement the 2030 Agenda** with a focus on leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.
- ✓ **Measuring multidimensional poverty:** the \$1.90-a-day measure of poverty takes into account only a monetary dimension and not the variations in average income levels between countries. **Governments should look at many other dimensions**, including disempowerment, shame, exclusion, discrimination, the absence of political power, and modifying factors such as gender and duration, among others, so poverty “in all its forms” can be eradicated everywhere.